

The VALLEY OF THE GIANTS

BY PETER B. KYNE
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SYNOPSIS.

CHAPTER I.—Pioneer in the California redwood region, John Cardigan, at forty-seven, is the leading citizen of Sequoia, owner of mills, ships, and many acres of timber, a widower after three years of married life, and father of two-day-old Bryce Cardigan.

CHAPTER II.—At fourteen Bryce makes the acquaintance of Shirley Sumner, a visitor to Sequoia, and his junior by a few years. Together they visit the Valley of the Giants, sacred to John Cardigan and his son as the burial place of Bryce's mother, and part with mutual regret.

CHAPTER III.—While Bryce is at college John Cardigan meets with heavy business losses and for the first time views the future with uncertainty.

CHAPTER IV.—After graduation from college, and a trip abroad, Bryce Cardigan comes home. On the train he meets Shirley Sumner, on her way to Sequoia to make her home there with her uncle, Col. Pennington. Bryce learns that his father's eyesight has failed and that Col. Pennington is seeking to take advantage of the old man's business misfortunes.

CHAPTER V.—In the Valley of the Giants young Cardigan finds a tree felled directly across his mother's grave. Indications are that it was cut down to secure the burl, and evidence seems to show that Pennington and his woods-boss, Jules Rondeau, are implicated in the outrage.

"I dare say it's quite all right to have invited him, isn't it, Uncle Seth?" "Certainly, certainly, my dear. Quite all right, but, er—ah, slightly inconvenient. I am expecting other company Thursday night—unfortunately, Brayton, the president of the Bank of Sequoia, is coming up to dine and discuss some business affairs with me afterward; so if you don't mind, my dear, suppose you call young Cardigan up and ask him to defer his visit until some later date."

"Certainly, uncle. What perfectly marvelous roses! How did you succeed in growing them, Uncle Seth?"

He smiled sourly. "I didn't raise them," he replied. "That half-breed Indian that drives John Cardigan's car brought them around about an hour ago, along with a card. There it is, beside your plate."

She blushed ever so slightly. "I suppose Bryce Cardigan is vindictive himself," she murmured as she withdrew the card from the envelope. As she had surmised, it was Bryce Cardigan's. Colonel Pennington was the proprietor of a similar surmise.

"Fast work, Shirley," he murmured banteringly. "I wonder what he'll send you for luncheon. Some dill pickles, probably."

She pretended to be very busy with the roses, and not to have heard him.

Shirley, left alone at the breakfast-table, picked idly at the preserved figs the owl's butler set before her. Vaguely she wondered at her uncle's apparent hostility to the Cardigans; she was as vaguely troubled in the knowledge that until she should succeed in eradicating this hostility, it must inevitably act as a bar to the further progress of her friendship with Bryce Cardigan. And she told herself she did not want to lose that friendship. She wasn't the least bit in love with him, but she realized he was rather lovable. And lastly he was a good, devoted son and was susceptible of development into a congenial and wholly acceptable comrade to a young lady absolutely lacking in other means of amusement.

She finished her breakfast in thoughtful silence; then she went to the telephone and called up Bryce. He recognized her voice instantly and called her name before she had opportunity to announce her identity.

"Thank you so much for the beautiful roses, Mr. Cardigan," she began.

"I'm glad you liked them. Nobody picks flowers out of our garden, you know. I used to, but I'll be too busy hereafter to bother with the garden. By the way, Miss Sumner, does your uncle own a car?"

"I believe he does—a little old rat-tat-trap which he drives himself."

"Then I'll send George over with the Napier this afternoon. You might care to take a spin out into the surrounding country. By the way, Miss Sumner, you are to consider George and that car as your personal property. I fear you're going to find Sequoia a dull place; so whenever you wish to go for a ride, just call me up, and I'll have George report to you."

"But think of all the expensive gasoline and tires!"

"Oh, but you mustn't look at things from that angle after you cross the Rocky mountains on your way west. What are you going to do this afternoon?"

"I don't know. I haven't thought that far ahead."

"For some real sport I would suggest that you motor up to Laguna Grande. That's Spanish for Big Laguna, you know. Take a rod with you. There are some lake-locked salmon in the lagoon."

"But I haven't any rod."

"I'll send you over a good one."

"But I have nobody to teach me

how to use it," she hinted daringly.

"I appreciate that compliment," he flashed back at her, "but unfortunately my holidays are over for a long, long time. I took my father's place in the business this morning."

"So soon?"

"Yes. Things have been happening while I was away. However, speaking of fishing, George Sea Otter will prove an invaluable instructor. He is a good boy and you may trust him implicitly. On Thursday evening you can tell what success you had with the salmon."

"Oh, that reminds me, Mr. Cardigan. You can't come Thursday evening, after all." And she explained the reason. "Suppose you come Wednesday night instead."

"We'll call that a bet. Thank you."

She chuckled at his frank good humor. "Thank you, Mr. Cardigan, for all your kindness and thoughtfulness; and if you will persist in being nice to me, you might send George Sea Otter and the car at one-thirty. I'll be glad to avail myself of both until I can get a car of my own sent up from San Francisco. Till Wednesday night, then. Good bye."

As Bryce Cardigan hung up, he heaved a slight sigh. It was difficult to get out of the habit of playing; he found himself the possessor of a very great desire to close down the desk, call on Shirley Sumner, and spend the remainder of the day basking in the sunlight of her presence.

Following his discovery of the outrage committed on his father's sanctuary, Bryce wasted considerable valuable time and effort in a futile endeavor to gather some further hint of the identity of the vandals; but despairing at last, he dismissed the matter from his mind, resolving only that on Thursday he would go up into Pennington's woods and interview the redoubtable Jules Rondeau. Bryce's natural inclination was to wait upon Mr. Rondeau immediately, if not sooner, but the recollection of his dinner engagement at the Pennington home warned him to proceed cautiously; for while harboring no apprehensions as to the outcome of a possible clash with Rondeau, Bryce was not so optimistic as to believe he would escape unscathed from an encounter.

Colonel Pennington's pompous imported British butler showed Bryce into the Pennington living room at six-thirty, announcing him with due ceremony. Shirley rose from the piano where she had been idly fingering the keys and greeted him with every appearance of pleasure—following which, she turned to present her visitor to Colonel Pennington, who was standing in his favorite position with his back to the fireplace.

"Uncle Seth, this is Mr. Cardigan, who was so very nice to me the day I landed in Red Bluff."

The Colonel bowed. "I have to thank you, sir, for your courtesy to my niece." He had assumed an air of reserve, of distinct aloofness, despite his studied politeness.

"Your niece, Colonel, is one of those fortunate beings the world will always clamor to serve."

"Quite true, Mr. Cardigan. When she was quite a little girl I came under her spell myself."

"So did I, Colonel. Miss Sumner has doubtless told you of our first meeting some twelve years ago."

"Quite so, May I offer you a cocktail, Mr. Cardigan?"

"Thank you, certainly. Dad and I have been planning one on about this time every night since my return."

"Shirley belongs to the Band of Hope," the Colonel explained. "She's ready at any time to break a lance with the Deacon Rum. So we will have to drink her share, Mr. Cardigan. Pray be seated."

Bryce seated himself. "Well, we lumbermen are a low lot and naturally fond of dissipation," he agreed. "I fear Miss Sumner's prohibition tendencies will be still further strengthened after she has seen the mad-train."

"What is that?" Shirley queried.

"The mad-train runs over your uncle's logging railroad into Township nine, where his timber and ours is located. It is the only train operated on Sunday, and it leaves Sequoia at five p. m. to carry the Pennington and Cardigan crews back to the woods after their Saturday-night celebration in town. As a usual thing, all hands with the exception of the brakeman, engineers, and fireman, are singing, weeping or fighting drunk."

"Do they fight, Mr. Cardigan?"

"Frequently. I might say usually. It's quite an inspiring sight to see a couple of lumberjacks going to it on a flat-car traveling thirty miles an hour."

"How horrible!"

"Yes, indeed. The right of way is lined with empty whisky bottles."

Colonel Pennington spoke up. "We don't have any fighting on the mad-train any more," he said blandly.

"Indeed! How do you prevent it?" Bryce asked.

"My woods-boss, Jules Rondeau, makes them keep the peace," Pennington replied with a small smile. "If there's any fighting to be done, he does it."

"You mean among his own crew, of course," Bryce suggested.

"No, he's in charge of the mad-train, and whether a fight starts among your men or ours, he takes a hand. He's had them all behaving mildly for quite

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